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THE SPIRIT OF YOUNG ENGLAND "COMING OUT"

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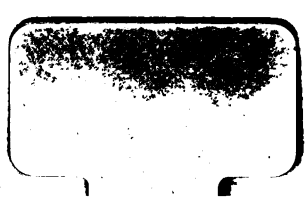

MRS. DELECTABLE AND HER PUPILS.

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Letters

MRS. DELECTABLE

AND

HER PUPILS;

OR,

THE SPIRIT OF YOUNG ENGLAND

"COMING OUT."

LONDON:
HUGH CUNNINGHAM, 193, STRAND.

1845.

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MRS. DELECTABLE AND HER PUPILS:

OR,

THE SPIRIT OF YOUNG ENGLAND

"COMING OUT."

LETTER I.

Myrtle House.

MY DEAR ELIZA,

Mrs. Delectable is spending a few days in the country, and I therefore take this favourable opportunity of writing to you. The *delectable* absence of this *delectable* of all Mrs. Delectables will account for the non-appearance of a few obstinate lines, which sometimes escape the India-rubber's scrutiny. It will account, also, for a slight dearth in the exactness of my expressions, as I shall not begin

with the hackneyed old school-phrase, "Dear Mrs. Delectable desires me to say with her kindest love, &c. &c."

Governesses are very nice people in their way; and schools are excellent residences, when they are neither too warm nor too cold, too strictly nor too carelessly, conducted; but it is seldom indeed that we meet with this *beau milieu;* and *en toute* confidence, trusting to Mrs. Delectable's absence, I confess that I shall be very delighted when the time arrives for my being emancipated from school-room discipline.

Pray write by return of post, and let me receive a budget of news; let me also hear how you spent the Christmas week. What a refinement of cruelty it is on Mrs. Delectable's part, not to allow us to go home except at Midsummer! But I believe the plan answers admirably well; and we are going to have an

addition to our côterie, by the arrival of two sisters, who have hitherto revelled in the enjoyment of their six weeks at Christmas—much to the annoyance of father and mother, grown-up sisters, and servants. Oh, what a delightful prospect appeared before those affectionate creatures' eyes, when Mrs. Delectable's well drawn-up prospectus met their gaze, recording in large characters—"*Holidays once-a-year only!*"

I must thank you for your parcel; you may readily believe it was very welcome. Mrs. Delectable thought the cake rather too rich; and I think you will call it a delicate attention on her part, when I tell you she first tested its worth by indulging the parlour-boarders with it! She plied them with very anti-homœopathic doses; for she justly observed, they were old enough to get better if they were ill! So pray, my dear, never send me a rich cake again,

unless you wish to save the parlour bread and butter. The weather is very cold, but of course we are turned out of our snug quarters on every favourable opportunity, and wrapped in our boas, in which we half ensconce our faces; we resemble a troop of Polar bears, and we have effectually frightened away a boys' school, who used to promenade at the same hour we perform our march! Bye the bye, certainly our promenade will not promote the march of intellect, for we have only one conversation, and it is catching through the ranks. There seems to be an epidemic rage for calling out—"How cold it is!" "I am frozen!" "I am sure I am blue!" "Oh, my nose!" "Oh, my fingers!" Like the Quakers, we speak only from our encampments of fur, when the "Spirit moves us," and it is a chilly spirit just now!

Madame is calling me, and the thought of

her sallow face, and the odious "*Noël et Chapsal*" has effectually cured me of any further quizzing; so in most grammatical, orthographical, sober, and earnest gravity,

Believe me,

Your friend and school-fellow,

MARIA MONTAGU.

LETTER II.

Ponsonby Manor.

MY DEAR MARIA,

I was much delighted with your letter; indeed, the first page would have been sufficient to make me think Mrs. Delectable had deprived you of the pleasure of her chaperonage, in bringing your letter to a safe conclusion.

I have no doubt, my dear, that I shall feel all the importance of having left school bye and bye; but at present my lady mother's

surveillance is nearly as strict as Mrs. Delectable's; the only difference is, that the latter sets patent traps to catch delinquents, which are sure and never-failing; whilst with mouse-like nimbleness I often escape at home, and a very slight headache will send away my masters, all bowing and condoling, all condescension, and full of advice—given gratis.

I am to *come out* in the spring. You can imagine it will be an important period in my life. Old Nurse, who is very fond of making sapient remarks, told me the other day—"Remember, Miss Maria, you will not be able to step back into your shell when you once come out." By this elegant rhapsody I was to conclude nurse compares me "to a snail." It *is* a snail-like progress—this *coming out*. We hear something about it every day, and yet, oh gracious! how many operations I have yet to go through. My dancing-mistress comes

every other day; Mamma sits in a chair at the end of the room; Papa is on her right hand, and I advance towards them, and bow, having to imagine Mamma is the Queen, and Papa Prince Albert. But I am quite sure His Royal Highness has a very ill-bred representative, for Papa is so rude. The other day, after I had advanced ten times, and retired quite discomfited, he rose hastily, exclaiming, "Maria, you look like a goose stretching its neck forward to hail the return of its goslings!" What do you think of that? Why, I fairly cried; however, Mamma scolded Papa in regal style, which partly consoled me, and Madame Tourraine declared I was "*fort gentille, pleine de grace, avec une tournure ravissante.*"

This bowing operation is very tedious; but I am assured Prince Albert never called a young lady of eighteen a goose, a gosling, or

anything belonging to that class of animals; indeed, I am told he never looks at young ladies at all.

You ask me how I spent the Christmas week. We were in the country—that being, you know, orthodox. I went through the usual operations of eating turkey, mince-pies, and plum-pudding; burned my hands in a mixture of brandy and raisins, called "snap-dragons;" danced the Polka; and read Dickens's "Chimes." Of course Dickens always writes well; but I did not like the "Chimes" so much as his other works; because school-girls (you know I am only *half* a shade removed from them) like to *cry* when they read a book, feeling it must be then very pathetic; and the "Chimes" did not make me weep. We danced the "new year in" and the "old year out;" so perchance, our ears were regaled by those very chimes which sent

poor Toby into such a dreamy existence; however, we saw no phantom shapes, save ghostly white muslin dresses, flitting by in the waltz.

I pity you, my dear, knowing that to be at school at Christmas is a very dreadful case. I advise you to throw Mrs. Delectable, her two English teachers, her French Madame, and her twelve parlour-boarders, into a mesmeric state of forgetfulness; or, in fact, to manage any possible way to obtain your liberty. Barring out is a very warm and excellent game in cold weather, and Miss Edgeworth, in her "Parent's Assistant," gives you a very good sketch how to manage it. Why should not girls assert their independence as well as boys? I suppose you are allowed to read Mr. D'Israeli's "Coningsby." If you peruse it, mind you say you are in raptures when you come to the *dénouement;* protest the

political part suits the blue vein of your intellect; and mind, particularly *mind* you grasp well the opinions of "Young England," which we "*Young Ladies*" can reduce to this theory: "We are wiser than our grandfathers, grandmothers, great aunts and uncles, and we *will* have our own way, *non obstant tout obstacle.*"

What an advantage it is to you that I am "*coming out,*" whilst you are *stopping in!* Why, you will be *au fait* with everything when you make your appearance. You will make *un grand éclat.* See how proud Madame ought to be of the groundwork of her French, which I am now framing, to embellish my plain English. It will serve, like the floss-silk in embroidery, to make the whole extremely glowing.

Wishing you joy amidst "*Magnall,*" "*Noël et Chapsal,*" "*Zotti,*" "*Petits dictionaires,*"

"Butler's Globes," and all your agreeable companions,

Believe me,

Your *ancient* school-fellow,

ELIZA DASHWOOD.

P.S.—As dear Mrs. Delectable does not know we have corresponded since her absence, pray write me a ruled letter, in strict *rules* when she returns, and I have a copy of a note by me, which will do admirably well for an answer.

LETTER III.

Myrtle Cottage.

DEAREST ELIZA,

Dear Mrs. Delectable desires me to say, with her kind love, that she is extremely anxious to know how you are, as the inclemency of the season is very liable to have some effect upon you: at least, although

Mrs. Delectable hopes you are as carefully nursed at home as you were at school, she greatly apprehends that you are not likely to be sufficiently cautious.

I am glad to inform you that I am progressing in my studies—Italian and German especially. As I find the study of the latter language very difficult, you may readily believe how assiduously I apply myself to it, for, as Mrs. Delectable observes—"The only way to surmount difficulties is to be very diligent and patient." How thankful ought I to be when I dwell upon that lady's most excellent precepts; indeed, her kindness is, you know, engrafted in my heart. We are very busily engaged in working for the poor: our forfeits are the funds which enable Miss Manly to purchase the necessary materials for our labours; but how thankful we are that it is in our power to clothe the naked—indeed,

I have no doubt our parents would not supply us so liberally, were it not as a means of paying forfeits for this laudable work and as our pensioners are for the greater part the children of Mrs. Delectable's cook, we have the double pleasure of giving our charity *at home.*

I need not tell you how pleased I shall be to hear from you. Pray remember Mrs. Delectable's words, and attend well to your carriage, for as our mutual friend justly observes:—"If a young lady comes into the room, her chin elongated an inch before her body, the beholders must imagine they are going to speak to a goose."

Who could be rude enough to compare one of Mrs. Delectable's pupils to a goose? No one, of course, because we will not give them reason so to do. I have so many lessons to attend to, that I must most reluctantly conclude,

Farewell, dearest. Mrs. Delectable joins with me in wishing you every possible happiness. Awaiting your answer,

Believe me,

Most truly yours,

MARIA MONTAGU.

LETTER IV.

Ponsonby Manor.

MY DEAR MARIA,

I really could not allow a single hour to elapse without replying to your truly sensible and affectionate letter. Surely we should be most ungrateful girls if we could forget Mrs. Delectable's precepts, when away from her.

I fancy I see you all plying your industrious needles. What an innocent recreation! How pleased you must be to see each silver sixpence deposited in the poor box. I am so

delighted to hear how persevering you are. It is such a grateful return for Mrs. Delectable's kindness. Tell her, with my kind love, that I will be extremely cautious not to catch cold; and as she has taken vast pains to make me presentable, I will endeavour to take great care of myself, for fear the world should be deprived of the pleasure of seeing one of her pupils.

Pray do not fear respecting my carriage: I am quite aware of my own importance, and I remember Mrs. Delectable's words, "Hold up your head, as if you were the Queen of England." Now, I can fancy I am queen of Ponsonby Manor. I am going to send you a parcel; pray open it *yourself*, for I intend agreeably surprising dear Mrs. Delectable, by presenting her with a sample of my needle-work, and you will find some hot West Indian pickles in the box. Give them to our mutual

friend, and caution her that they are of a *piquante* nature, for I know her taste is very mild.

Remember me to all kind inquirers, and hoping you are good and attentive to dear Mrs. Delectable,

Believe me,

Yours very sincerely,

ELIZA DASHWOOD.

LETTER V.

Ponsonby Manor.

MY DEAR MARIA,

I trust my star, Fortunatus, has set in a favourable quarter, and that my letter lodged in the hemisphere of your wooden cake-box, will find its way into the only *sanctum sanctorum* a school-girl possesses—her little desk with its patent key.

I trust, also, that my last epistle edified

you, and gratified our *mutual* friend. I sugared her the other day, and mean to pepper her now; so pray present her with my *cadeau.* I hope she will like the sample of Indian mildness, and I am sure *you* do *not* wish they may burn her mouth—oh no, of course not. I ought to be very low spirited to-day; but the fact is, I am not half pensive enough to suit the occasion, and was obliged to read three romantic volumes before I could appear in the drawing-room, there to wear a face as long as three of Mrs. Delectable's parlour-boarders' ex-beautiful countenances. The fact is, Uncle Alfred is going to be married, and as Mamma was the only relation he ever cared about, she expected all his property, whenever it might please him to resign it. Now, her amiable expectations are at an end, and she is wearing a doleful-Jenny face — anything

save *congratulational* for the auspicious occasion.

Uncle's old housekeeper is sadly disappointed in certain speculations she had in her bright cranium. She never would have sported such a chamelion-like change of blue, pink, red, and yellow cap-strings, unless Uncle had sometimes raised her hopes above the housekeeper's story.

It might be the effect of the cold weather —who can tell? But the said Mrs. Ganby went into hysterics of terrible duration. The butler used three bottles of water, burnt the ends of the hens' and cocks' best feathers, spilled a merciless quantity of lavender-water, shouted in her ears; and at last tearing the lace from off her best cap, he succeeded in hushing her lamentations, as between each fainting-fit Mrs. Ganby chose to be very eloquent, and the finest speech I can

faithfully record amongst the "*on dits*" was this :—

"May the next tart I make for master choke him !"

No ex-minister ever resigned his post, leaving half so memorable a speech for historians to record.

I believe we are going to London, as Uncle Alfred does not think there are enough persons in the country to witness his "making a fool of himself," as Mamma emphatically calls it. But, however, as this sweet heroic uncle is rather on the shady side of sixty, I cannot help thinking he is old enough to please himself, quite

"Old enough to leave his mammy !"

Nay, do not start—Uncle Alfred's mammy lies snug enough in Kensal Green ; but

Mrs. Ganby has been as good as a mammy to him, plying him for the last twenty years with tarts and puddings, and sugared looks, and benevolent expressions.

Now for a description of the bride. She is not "fair, fat, and forty;" but dark, thin, and fifty. As tall as our church-steeple, and as stiff as five *jupes bouffantes* joined together —in her manners I mean; for as to *jupes bouffantes,* oh no! my future aunt disdains such pretensions to much substance, and is very much like a frost-bitten tree—admired by Uncle, for the retrospective benevolence —that she might have been better looking when younger.

I believe the way in which this charming spinster captivated my Uncle was by giving him a corn-plaister, which, to use her inamorato's own words—"made him fancy

he was in Paradise." There are several kind relations, who have long wished him there; but he is as terrestrial as ever, whatever his little corn-cured toe may be.

I want you to procure me a few songs; as Fonturna knows so well what suits my voice, you can, if you are at all dexterous at smuggling, enclose a letter in your parcel—not a Delectable production, but a Montagu budget.

I need not tell you my charming piece of needle-work was purchased at the smart new shop in our village. I hope there are a few false stitches, or I believe our dear experienced friend will not be mistaken in supposing "I did not do it by myself," as the girls say at school.

I will send you Mrs. Butler's Poems. I think they are very pretty—more than pretty —pathetic, and feeling. Trusting that you have no Hymen-smitten uncles, no frost-

bitten aunts, nothing so atrocious and vexatious, condole with

Your sorrowing friend,

ELIZA DASHWOOD.

LETTER VI.

Myrtle Cottage.

Condole with you, dear Eliza! I pity your sorrows from the depth of my heart—a mine of great profoundness, I can assure you, considering that it has never lost one inch yet, nor never will, I hope, unless I am captivated by a dear old man, such as your Uncle Alfred. Why did he not tell me last year, that he contemplated matrimony? I should have offered myself for a candidate; but I wish him every joy with his frost-nipped sposa.

Do not send me Mrs. Butler's Poems. Poetry is excommunicated from our school,

for Mrs. Delectable discovered that Miss Stacey had a mania for writing verses. Our weekly reading in Shakspeare, "Marmion," "The Lady of the Lake" — even Montgomery's sweet lays are under lock and key; *et malheur* to the lovers of the Muse. Sooth to say, Miss Stacey's verses were not of a nature to alarm any one, but Mrs. Delectable has, as you well know, a keen eye, which soars into futurity; and as Miss Stacey is a favourite of hers, she could not bear to contemplate her pet suffering all the tedious horrors of authorship. No wonder her kind heart melted to the softness of cream-cheese, when she found the following effusion of the Muse, neatly written on paper *couleur de rose,* folded up like a star, and directed to Miss Bowring, who labours under the opprobrium of having encouraged this painful futurity of genius.

These were the lines :—

> "I cannot write, I can't indeed ;
> Could I begin, I might proceed;
> I hope you are quite well, my dear,
> And wish you a happy New Year:
> I can't say more, or else I would;
> I've said herein all that I could."

"Indeed, proceed; dear, year; would, could." How charmingly it rhymes! how innocent the subject! how diffident is this child of genius," exclaimed Mrs. Delectable, wiping a slight moisture which had gathered on her spectacles. And after reading the most poetical rhapsody a second and a third time, Miss Bowring and Miss Stacey were summoned to the presence of *Delectab—ility* itself. After holding a private council of some length, the trio entered the school-room, apparently most amicably determined to agree with old Weller, that writing poetry was the surest way to lead to the gallows. Mrs. Delectable then

proceeded to tell us that it was a duty on her part to check all inclination for a literary career, for authors, she said—especially poets—"had died in Grub-street, in garrets." I *think* she told us, "up half a thousand steps." Only fancy mounting our Pegasus so high, and dying in Grub-street! Our evenings are spent like they used to be in your days; we congregate—round the fire, I was going to say, but I mean round a guard, as high as the shortest girl in the school; we then play at "cross questions, and crooked answers," and Miss Falstaff afterwards amuses us with her far-famed witticisms. As she is Mrs. Delectable's best parlour-boarder, pays for bed-room fires, composed of discarded parlour ashes; as, in fact, her bill is full of strange and lofty items, we are of course obliged to pay her all sorts of delicate attentions. But, dear Eliza, pity our risible

powers, which are sadly chained up, for we listen with most suffocating gravity to intolerable attempts at riddles and enigmas from Miss Falstaff's store-room of mental wit. The last two are considered by the fair lady as her most happy productions of spontaneous genius:—

"Why is an orange like the House of Commons?—Because it is headed by *Peel!*"

One bold young lady ventured to suggest that she did not know what the head of an orange meant; but Miss Falstaff pettishly replied that she was intensely ignorant, as an orange was surrounded by *Peel,* (peel) and so was the House of Commons; and *headed* and *surrounded,* in Miss Falstaff's opinion, were the same. As if a scholar dare contradict a parlour-boarder!

Madame found the young lady was sitting with her feet crossed; and took this favourable

opportunity of sending her to bed; then Miss Falstaff's wit returned, and she gave us the following *intricate* enigma :—

"My first is the fourth letter in the alphabet—"

"D." cried half a score of clever scholars.

"Very well," said Miss Falstaff, "but now for the second. My second means nothing at all, but makes sense for my first and third."

"Nothing at all!" exclaimed a chorus of voices.

"Let me see," cried the poetical Miss Stacey, "Is it void?"

"No."

"Is it *ought?*"

"No."

"Leave out the second," said Miss Falstaff, finding we could not make anything of "Nothing at all."

"My third is the innocent being who was sacrificed to his brother's revenge."

The grown-up girls did not answer immediately, for it was some time since we had read "Genesis;" but one very little girl asked herself the plain question, "Who was Cain?" and most ungenerously a smaller creature exclaimed:—

"Adam's eldest son, who killed his brother Abel."

"Quite right," said Miss Falstaff, clapping her hands, "quite right! Abel is the *third*, only we must spell it *Able*. Now, dears, my *whole* means exquisite sweetness, and is applicable to a lady we all dearly love." So, dear Eliza, we were led to believe that this charming *whole* constitutes the word *Delectable*.

Of course Mrs. Delectable was highly pleased with the best parlour-boarder's wit;

and went so far as to declare that the obscurity of the second clause serves to make the enigma very out of the common routine of such witticisms.

I believe Miss Falstaff intends sending the enigma to "Punch." By the bye, if you know any contributor to that delightful journal, do ask him to expand Punch's figure to something more elongated, for Mrs. Delectable has forbidden our reading it, because she says it gives us an erroneous opinion of *man-kind;* by which we have agreed that if Punch's feet were more in proportion to his bulky body, and his neck slightly elevated, we might not be so misled, and be able to hail him in our establishment. My paper is quite full, and my head is getting quite empty, so farewell.

Your affectionate friend,

MARIA MONTAGU.

Letter VII.

Berkeley Square.

My dear Maria,

Forgive me for not sending you a pathetic "adieu to rural life!" but the fact is, I never was poetic—no, never; for once I attempted romance, and it proved a failure. I was admiring a star from our window at Ramsgate, and in a celestial rapture, began to say great and wondrous things about it; when my Cousin John burst into a fit of laughter, and declared I was admiring a lamp light, from a distant light-house. This cured me of poetic romance; and if I ever go to the gallows, like Weller's friend, the coachman, making verses shall never bring me in contact with Jack Ketch. I need not now tell you that I have bid farewell to Ponsonby Manor, and leaving the fair green fields of Essex, am

now sitting in the library in Berkeley Square, and my sapient wisdom has caused me to come to the conclusion "that gazing at smoky chimneys is less attractive than leafless trees." But this glorious wedding occupies all my time; and as I have the misfortune to write a thin-stroked, long-tailed, lady-like hand-writing, my uncle has insisted upon my inditing the nuptial invitations. I was exceedingly amused at Poetry's banishment from the Myrtle establishment, around whose stems verse had hitherto twined itself. It is to be hoped that the discarded Muse will find some safe domain, and not die a poverty-stricken death in Grub-street. Had Lord Byron been alive, he would perhaps have returned from Greece, and enforced the necessity of his volumes being an exception to the cruel rule; for how many school-girls occupy an idle hour in composing *Byronic* verses, by cleverly

changing the last word! I do not say poor Miss Stacey was guilty of such a deed. I should say her Muse was an original one, and Murray would be glad to give her a thousand pounds for the copyright. The evening of *the* grand wedding, we are going to have a "Polka dance," as Mamma thinks it is a good way of saving a doctor's bill, as it most effectually sends away chilblains. The best method of learning the fashion, is to buy "Jullien's Polka," and send it to your French milliner, who, perhaps, taking the hint verbatim, will send you a partner all *Polka-booted.* I am sorry Mrs. Delectable will not allow "Punch" to intrude at Myrtle Cottage. I assure you he is a most harmless being, and takes the whole English nation under his benevolent *surveillance.* As to flirting, he never was guilty of such a breach of decorum, which is the reason the volatile French have discarded

him; scarce a French woman could be found to smuggle him, because he is too faithful to his bride Judy. It is, however, rather fashionable to be separated, and I advise Punch to take advantage of the "*Times*," as they have lately recorded several enlightening examples of the kind, for the benefit of new-married people. I will not vouch for the truth, but report says that Judy winked fondly at a likeness of the Prince de Joinville; and the same authentic source says that she exclaimed, "What a duck he is; what beautiful hair! what splendid eyes! he *is* a duck! what a pity my husband calls him a gander!" If this treacherous speech be true, Punch will henceforth be *au service des jeunes demoiselles;* but if the trial takes place, I will let you have the paper; should you be expelled, you know where Punch resides, and he is always ready to take up the destitute.

Pray ask to spend a day at your aunt's; and take the opportunity of writing to me, for those little dear good notes of yours, written on school-room deal, free from blotches, full of morality, are like dessert after sumptuous dinner, "very good to look at." Let me have a letter when I am fasting, as hunger is better than being over-fed. I am sure the people at the Union would agree with me.

I will agree with you in saying I have written enough dry rubbish to shoot three fields of sense; therefore adieu.

Your attached friend,

ELIZA DASHWOOD.

LETTER VIII.

Claremont Terrace.

MY DEAR ELIZA,

Surely when our grateful hearts swell in the overflow of exuberant pleasure, oh! surely

then we ought to pray for the long life of our dear relations—especially for a good Aunty, who resides near the spot where our intellects are stretched to the elasticity of patent *macintoshes*. You may talk about being over-fed; then you have not been dining on boiled mutton, and an apology for caper-sauce, varied occasionally by a pie the girls emphatically call "resurrection pie," because we hail in its anatomy the return of sundry dainty pieces we thought had slumbered long in oblivion. Thanks, however, to the dear aunt who resides here, I am able to form a judgment between necessary food and dainties; and in my eagerness to vote for the latter, I fancy I am a giant instead of a delicate school girl, and am generally confined to my room after the first dinner, by which means I obtain three days' holiday, instead of one; but I remember grand-papa always pleaded that

he had the gout when he was called to attend the grand jury, and I suppose the gout is hereditary; I have no doubt it is what I suffer from, though Mrs. Delectable terms it "bilious."

I suppose you think *we* are not fashionable enough to dance the Polka. I can assure you we have long been perfect in all the mysteries of the "heel and toe." I am told it is much better to dance it with a gentleman, but I do not fancy it can be possible; for once, when Monsieur Dechamp, our dancing-master, honoured me with his partnership, he called out at the third turn—

"*Que diable!* why for you jomp like a cat after one leetle mouse?"

Eh bien, ma chère! I determined not to dance the Polka with a gentleman.

I shall very often be able to answer your amusing letters, for we have a new school-

fellow, whose friends reside here. She will of course be postman-general, and I have provided myself with anti-Graham wafers of great celebrity, and unless our postman suspects I am carrying on a *political* intrigue, I really imagine no bribes would corrupt her fidelity. A description of our fair postman would not interest you much, for Heath's Beauties are goddesses to what she is; but as you are fond of new faces, behold the ornament of our school!—a dumpy figure, sallow complexion, low forehead, grey eyes, pug nose, large mouth, hair neither black nor brown, grey, flaxen, nor red, but a sort of black and brown mixture together. The fair young lady has already excited Mrs. Delectable's *kind regards*, and, as she is the daughter of a rich banker, and the niece of a baronet, besides possessing a gold watch, a beautiful

desk, work-box, and every enviable luxury a school-girl can possess, Mrs. Delectable has kindly declared that she entertains much hope of her hopeful pupil. Pug-noses,* she says, often indicate great facility of learning; they *soar up* at everything, and are too *pugnacious* to allow a Roman or a Grecian to over-balance their merits. So Mrs. Delectable *knows* she can make something of our postman's *pug*. Your description of Punch raised my hopes of seeing him *some day* to such a pitch of excitement, that I called out twice in my sleep last night—"'Punch!' I wish I had 'Punch!'

"Do you want some punch," said Aunty this afternoon; "it is a strange request from a

* This account of a nose savours rather of "Punch." The plagiarism was so unintentional that the author has left it as in the MS.

young lady; but as you are so bilious, my dear, after that fish, soup, turkey, ham, roast beef, mince-pies, plum pudding, almonds and raisins, figs, oranges, biscuits, preserves, and as you have only had three glasses of port wine and two of sherry, why, really, a little punch would answer as well as a Seidlitz powder."

Forthwith proceeded Aunty to make a mixture of an intoxicating nature, rendering it *piquante* by squeezing a lemon with its component virtues. I do not wonder old gentlemen die of red noses and shortness of breath; it is as well to die of that malady, as from "learning till we have no breath to learn." *En toute* confidence, I am afraid I took a *leetle* too much; but Aunt said it was beautiful to watch my *animal* spirits. I am, therefore, afraid I swallowed a strange mixture of humanity, for, as my spirits were quite *bottle* ones, if they were animal, some poor creature

must have been pounded in a patent tread-mill, and there immured. Guarded by several teachers, and a strong reinforcement of parlour-boarders, we were taken to a concert last week. A concert! *Mon Dieu!* Jullien's baton was wanted there. It is too *outré* for a school-girl to faint, or really I should have stood the battle of feathers, hartshorn, water, anything save losing the drum of my ear, by Madame shouting in it. Well do I remember, when dear Mrs. Delectable fainted, (because I had a hole in my stocking at my dancing lesson), how poor Madame shouted—"Dear Mrs. De—le—ec—ec—ta—be—ble," and that worthy lady recovered, giving Madame a box on her ears, for which she did not apologize; for I believe such little deviations from the rules of politeness are quite allowed in those interesting maladies.

Pray send a letter for me to Aunty: she is

so fond of hearing your description of London. Adieu for the present, dear Eliza.

Your friend,

MARIA MONTAGU.

LETTER IX.

Myrtle Cottage.

DEAR MISS DASHWOOD,

As the period has returned when your young friend Eliza Montagu generally has the pleasure of writing to you, I think it best to inform you that she is suffering from a severe bilious attack, which, poor child, she is very liable to suffer from whenever her aunt, Lady Markham, invites her to Claremont Terrace. I am afraid the air is too close for her, for Myrtle Cottage, you know, has the advantage "of being situated in a dry and airy space of

ground, where all humidity is carefully excluded; the grounds surrounding the cottage are gravelled, and perfectly impenetrable to the damp of the weather, which renders them safe promenades after the heaviest storm." But, my dear Miss Dashwood, you know that a full description of Myrtle Cottage is given in my "prospectus," and occasionally inserted in the "Herald" or "Times." It is wonderful that amidst the stirring politics of the day, the wars in China, "Young England's" theories, the birth of princes and princesses, and letters of such length as editors answer, it is indeed wonderful that those gentlemen take the trouble of noticing my humble cottage. To-morrow will be a great day amongst my young people; but I have no doubt your kind heart anticipates what I allude to — you know it is my birth-day.

Tears of sweet pensiveness dim my eyes, when I remember how many girls have been made happy on the return of that day. I should perhaps enjoy it more myself, were it not that I feel overwhelmed with the unmerited honours showered upon me. The beautiful little clock in the drawing-room is a memento of last year's festival; but dearer still —far dearer than the most beautiful *cadeaux*, are the innocent little notes which I receive from my affectionate pupils. It is to be hoped they will not have expended their savings upon me this year, for, as I said last time the festivity was held, "Our great hero, Wellington, is satisfied with one Hercules before his house," and why should I once a twelvemonth be reminded that I am so unworthy to receive such innocent tribute?

I sincerely trust your kind parents are quite well, and I also hope you are as happy as

you were at Myrtle Cottage. That you may long continue so is the earnest prayer of

Your sincere well-wisher,

CLARISSA ANGELINA DELECTABLE.

LETTER X.

Berkeley Square.

DEAR MRS. DELECTABLE,

It is very kind and considerate of you to have taken the trouble of informing me of my poor friend's illness. I believe her grandfather, and all her family, suffered from the same malady; but it must be particularly distressing for you to witness Eliza's illness, at a time, too, when all your pupils are so eager to be around you. I have no doubt the air of Claremont Terrace is very humid indeed; for as to suppose the diet can have

anything to do with Eliza's indisposition, that is too absurd; for you ever strive, I know, to vary your bill of fare, in order that, when we leave your establishment, we should be perfectly inured to pasties and delicacies; indeed, I think no pies can equal those of Myrtle Cottage.

I hope you will do me the favour of accepting this little cameo brooch: it is a trifling mark of my recollection of the eventful day which my school-fellows are going to celebrate.

I hope, also, that you will forgive the young ladies, even should they have expended all their savings. You must allow me to be the peace-maker, and you *must* promise not to be angry with them for feeling, as they do, your kindness. It is, I know, with painful emotion that they remember that they will shortly part from *all they love.*

You will be delighted to hear that I am so busy with various masters, that I really cannot spare any time, even for this delightful employment. Wishing you many happy returns of the day,

Believe me,

Dear Mrs. Delectable,

Your attached young friend,

ELIZA DASHWOOD.

LETTER XI.

Berkeley Square.

Poor, dear, MARIA! How I pity you, surrounded by the suffocating kindness of a dear aunt, tempted by sickening delicacies, pampered with punch, and foregoing the delightful *réunion* of pleasure at Myrtle Cottage. Mrs. Delectable took the opportune moment to remind me it was her birth-day, and to

express her fear that the shillings which were too sordid to find their way in the poor-box, should, by some strange fatality, contribute to remind her that she had existed upon food and the classics, and had spent another year in this world of sin. I left our *mutual* friend to judge whether you were sorry at parting with what you love in the shape of the Mammon—money, or whether you thought it dreadful to contemplate leaving her, and her "Myrtle," to brave the winter's storm. I presented her with a cameo brooch: a handsome head is rather a tempting piece of anatomy to a widow lady; but if report speaks truly, Mr. Delectable was anything but delectable in his conduct; and when a married man is partial to the *rule of three,* I believe there is very little chance for his sposa's happiness. I hear there was a third, at least a second lady, who stept in to spoil a *duo,* and

sing an *amoroso trio,* and so I conclude Mrs. Delectable will not marry again, although, according to the most regal etiquette, I sent her a portrait as a temptation.

I can imagine the musical horror of listening to a bad concert, but I have been to a good one, which is the best way of sympathizing by contrast, as the rich pity the poor. Jullien's harps, performing the Irish Quadrilles, were charming: Miss Stacey would have exclaimed—"Entrancingly beautiful!" But if Jullien began, he *did* proceed; and a farmer was so struck with his performance, that he exclaimed—"See if I don't set a song to that music, and call it 'Paddy, what's the row!'" Jullien would call it very Irish to infringe the copyright of his Irish-isms: it would cost him a bottle of Macassar, from the friction his head would undergo in scratching out a new set; as I was told the other day, that "biting

one's nails, and scratching one's head, were common practices of composers and authors." Only fancy the elegant Count D'——y, or the Marchioness of L——y performing that pantomime! it is searching *high,* methinks, for a volume of travels. By the bye, my dear, to be *en régle,* an author must needs have a hole in his stocking; if he has not, the world will cut one for him. The wedding-day draws nigh, and with it certain misgivings on Uncle's part: he quite agrees that if he could have done worse, he could have done a better thing; and my new Aunt reverses the question. You cannot imagine anything more ludicrous than listening to "grown-up lovers' courtship." I do not mind a young girl marrying an old gentleman, but I do not like an old gentleman marrying an "old girl!"

Uncle's courtship is very much as if he were entering a new house, and was telling

his housekeeper the use of all the machinery around. The *oldish* bride *will* not be detained from her laudable purpose of taking charge of Uncle, his house, and property, or she *might*, I think, have preferred her cozy cup of Bohea; however, ladies of a certain age are, I am told, above the nonsense of saying "No," when it is quite as easy to say "Yes."

"My dear," says Uncle, "I am afraid it will wake you very early, for I am accustomed to have a cup of coffee brought to me in bed every morning at seven."

"Oh, I like to wake early," replied the bride, not to be coaxed into having the second-best bed-room as an alternative to early waking.

"I snore," continued Uncle, "and I sometimes—ay, *often* have a shocking cold."

"Poor dear!" cries his *inamorata*, "I know a little of *my* cough mixture would cure you."

"Are *you* subject to colds?" cries Uncle, sighing, either because of that circumstance, or, *perhaps*, because of the recollection of the corn-plaister, which took away his bachelor sense.

"Not subject to colds? oh, dear no—I am not quite old enough for that—"

Uncle did not tell his *fiancée* to open her mouth, that he might judge of her age, like a horse-dealer, by her teeth. Perhaps he knew that method was useless, as I think the lady has a false and a real one alternately; but he took a general survey of her countenance, and then cried out—"Too young, of course, my dear."

After a pause, Uncle continued—"I have a great habit of falling asleep after dinner. I was mesmerised once; and, by tattooing my eyes with my fingers, I can throw myself into dreamy bliss, and save my physician's guinea."

Mamma whispered me, she wished he had tattooed his eyes when he felt inclined to propose to my new Aunt; but the latter dear creature replied very sweetly, I thought, "that she had a great taste for mesmerism, and had read Miss Martineau's account of herself; and if that lady were cured of illness by mesmerism, why should not Uncle *prevent* illness coming by the same means?"

Poor dear Uncle! thinking that "prevention is better than cure," went on to say that he was *afraid* he was ill-tempered; he was sure he was gouty; he was getting very bald. But all in vain. So the poor martyr has fixed the day, and resigned himself to having a gay wedding. Whilst Aunt is very busy wondering whether pink, blue, orange, or green become her best; and Mamma, with a faint attempt at wit, tells her in an equivocal reply, that "either colour will look equally well on her!"

I cannot commence any other topic, for I should enlarge beyond the limits of Rowland's allowance, and a penny is all I contribute at once towards Prince—revenue.

That I *have* sent you enough scandal for a penny, no old maid, however fond of scandal, could deny. So no more from

Your gossiping friend,

ELIZA DASHWOOD.

LETTER XII.

Claremont Terrace.

MY DEAR ELIZA,

A week has elapsed, and I am still at Claremont Terrace, playing the invalid. Aunty has just informed me that if I am not worse, I must flourish under the Myrtle dynasty to-morrow. As my worthy relative laid a very particular stress upon the word

worse, I really believe I need not call myself *better,* as twenty-four hours cannot work a great cure, and my complaint is of so complicated a nature that it baffles the doctor to know where it exists. My lying here in state has saved me a visit from the dentist, who comes to Myrtle Cottage once every three months, in order to supply old gums with teeth just exported from young ones. I have read somewhere, "that women look best in tears, like flowers with the rosy dew hanging on them in pearly drops." I am sure our worthy dentist sees female beauty in its most touching form, if such be the case; for nothing can equal the series of groans, grimaces, and tears, accompanied by pathetic sobs, which resound when this terrible piece of humanity makes his appearance.

How beautiful it is to hear Mrs. Delectable's pathetic encouragement, as she goes from

one dear pupil to another, as pale as the ghost in "Hamlet." Macready never was more eloquent than the compassionate being who in a deep voice exclaims—"It will soon be over. Some persons have their arms and legs taken off; what say you, dears, to that? I do not think I should mind having a tooth drawn, nay, I am sure I should not." Upon which the worthy dentist smiles—for he knows very well that by drawing her teeth, Mrs. Delectable has only to loosen a certain gold spring, which lies at the back of her mouth. If we groan, our governess gives us a *delectable* pat on the shoulder. If we make grimaces, the dentist cries out—"How beautiful young ladies look in pain;" if we *faint*, that *is* the climax, for we have a wine-glass of Mrs. Delectable's best brandy poured down our mouths, at intervals of ten minutes for six drops; thus it takes two or three hours to intoxicate us.

Father Mathew himself would never find fault with this gentle manner of taking "water's rival;" nay, I strongly suspect, were he to try this homœopathic anti-teetotalism, he would end by repeating the dose *ad libitum.*

Mrs. Delectable's birth-day was spent as pleasantly as usual—that is to say, the girls were made intensely miserable by having a holiday, and consequently having too much leisure to quarrel. After dinner Mrs. Delectable generously distributed a little dessert, consisting of a walnut and a half a-piece, and two pegs of an orange: she was then led by her affectionate pupils into the music-room, where she was presented with a tea service complete, in imitation of the *cadeau* given to Balfe. I have no doubt our kind instructress "dreamt that she dwelt in china halls," with saucers and cups at her feet, for she

received her present as if she were born to be surrounded by generous pupils; and the end of the dream which "pleased her most" was, "that next birth-day would bring her the same." The evening was spent in dancing, the girls' spirits being recruited occasionally by lemonade; milk and water, with almonds grated in it, styled by way of courtesy *orgeât;* and plain cake, from which raisins were banished, lest they should triumph over the unpretending currants. After shivering for three hours and a half in thin book-muslins and short sleeves, the happy creatures retired to bed.

I forgot to tell you that the two Master Stepneys were admitted in the côterie, and you can imagine there was a great contention for the honour of their hands; never were two boys of thirteen and fifteen in such requisition. Although in the very blandest of humour, Mrs. Delectable could not help telling

us, "She could not allow such flirtation; it was quite as well" she said, "to fancy our partners were gentlemen, as to dance with the Master Stepneys." This consoled many female hearts, and rather wounded the Stepney dignity, for the eldest drawing up his flat shirt-collar, till it stood upright like a *real* stock, declared that "a gentleman was a gentleman after all," after which he proceeded to dance the Polka furiously, and stepped upon all the chilblains in the school.

I was still at Claremont Terrace during this interesting affair; but Miss Mortimer spent the afternoon of the next day with me, and she gave me a delightful account of Mrs. Delectable's natal day. I expect most impatiently your account of the gay wedding: how strange if it should not take place! There is, you know, "many a slip 'tween the cup and the lip." So we thought at school, when

Mrs. Delectable caught you stealing her cherry-brandy, at that auspicious moment when a "rosy red cherry" had *nearly* reached its destination.

Aunt begs to be remembered to you, and I beg you will not forget

Your attached friend,

MARIA MONTAGU.

LETTER XIII.

Berkeley Square.

MY DEAR MARIA,

It is over! as Napoleon would exclaim when he had gained one of his swift victories; and my new Aunt—now Mrs. Alfred Balcour—literally "stooped to conquer:" thus said the delightful Mrs. Nesbitt in the comedy; *thus* she said, perhaps, when she became Lady ———: thus said my Aunt when she stooped

and applied the corn-plaister to my Uncle's little toe.

As Mrs. Balcour could not determine what colour suited her best, she came to the wise conclusion of sporting a rainbow *divertissement* of various hues—a sky-blue satin, with pink trimmings; a chip bonnet, with lilac feathers; a green reticule, containing an amber-colour scent-bottle, for a fainting emergency. And now behold my new Aunt's bridal attire. Still disdaining the false *embonpoint* of *jupes bouffantes*, she looked like the leanest animal in Pharaoh's dream; whilst Uncle, wearing a blue coat a dismal face, and gold buttons, appeared a perfect caricature of patience and resignation. I should have deemed it necessary to search his pockets, lest he should have concealed poison (for he is very fond of Pickwick), but I remembered he did not marry a widow; and as Weller pronounces hanging

vulgar, I think the "tie of matrimony" will not place us in mourning for Uncle Alfred. Aunt had six bridesmaids, all dressed in cherry-coloured gauze and primrose scarfs. I was excluded, because as I have not yet "*come out,*" Mamma did not wish my charming person and toilet to find its way into the daily papers. Mamma mildly hinted that a little plain white would relieve the scene; but the bride declared, "She had no notion of looking like a snow-ball in January, and I stood in my obstinate white dress like "The last Rose of Summer," shivering in the gale.

All the bridesmaids were a strange complication of negatives, very much like Betty Pringle's pig. They were not tall nor short, pretty nor ugly, fair nor dark, smiling nor sighing; a sort of *beau milieu;* but "fine feathers make fine birds," and they were *very* fine indeed.

The best part of the wedding was the

déjeuné, where Gunter's finest taste was displayed. Aunt cried a little, just enough, and not too much, because she had a tell-tale bloom, which forbad the tears flowing freely, so there the pearly drops stood, to freeze at the corner of her grey eyes. After the attempt at weeping and the vain attempt at eating were partly over, Papa made a terribly prosy speech, in which his ardour led him to fancy he was addressing a young couple in their twenties. Then Uncle, looking intensely miserable, and slightly profound, arose, and something cousin-german to a sigh was heard, as he expressed all the bliss in which Cupid's shafts had thrown him. He advised all bachelors to imitate his example, and with a sickly smile declared himself the happiest creature living.

Now the happy pair have fled to spend the honey-moon, and freeze amidst the lakes.

Honey! It is to be hoped the bees will not poison themselves with the bitter nectar they will sip from Uncle's matrimonial parterre.

The dance in the evening was very delightful, and although I am *not out*, and some young ladies might disdain to be my *vis à vis*, I can assure you I danced with the tallest and handsomest men in the room; and as Mamma was in the very worst humour imaginable, I flirted terribly to make up for the time she has been teaching me what to say. Poor Mamma! her thoughts were so engrossed with Uncle Alfred's silly match, that I had ample leisure to listen to my admirers. How exquisitely correct they were! My dark eyes were, in their words, "azure skies," and my brown hair "threads of gold;" then I was a Venus in figure, and my complexion like the snow on Mount

Blanc. What a cold *dénouement* of my warm pretensions for admiration!

Wishing your delicate *santé* may improve *if* you wish it, recommending tonics, quiet, Stolberg's lozenges, cakes without plums, milk and water for *orgeât*, and mutton with caper-sauce,

Believe me,

Your sincere adviser,

ELIZA DASHWOOD.

LETTER XIV.

Myrtle Cottage.

MY DEAR ELIZA,

You may have wondered at the long interregnum between my last letter and this, but the fact is, the banker's daughter (our valuable postman), caught cold sitting too near a *draught*. Her Papa placed a *checque*

(check) on her, and we have not been able to *draw* upon her kindness: her illness cost her papa a long *bill,* and although the *stamp* has been placed on my letter for some time, I was quite at a *discount,* for I had no means of sending it to you; so there it remained, to remind me by *sight,* that you had not been able to acknowledge the *receipt* of it. Thank goodness, the postman is now well, and climbs the *bank* by Myrtle Cottage, without drawing any cold from *draughts.* I have quite recovered from my hereditary indisposition, but, labouring as I do under the supposition of being delicate, I am allowed to wear a knitted cardinal, and a "*bonnet à l'opéra,*" consequently, I should say, my temperature is five degrees higher than my companions', whose spirits warm as their members freeze at such an unnatural blessing being conferred on me.

Mr. ——n, the great mesmeriser, has been delighting us with several very clever lectures, as Mrs. Delectable says that mesmerism and politics now form an essential part of school-room lore. As we all strenuously refused to be mesmerised until we had seen its effect on some one else, and as no persuasion could induce the parlour-boarders to show us the example, the large tom-cat was brought into the parlour, and the cook held him. Mr. ——n passed his hand several times before the worthy animal's face, retired, advanced, made atrocious-looking grimaces. Tom mewed. Tom groaned. Tom winked his eyes. Tom slept. This was the climax. Mr. ——n now asked Tom several interesting questions, such as "Where did you put the fish you stole? How many mice have you eaten lately? Who is your love? Where does she live?" To all these questions Tom

replied in a clear distinct mew, mew—ew—ew, and Mr. ——n interpreted the answers for us.

Presently a little girl, about fourteen, arrived with a message to Mr. ——n, to inform him that a lady was waiting to be mesmerised; then Mr. ——n turned towards the little girl, and said, "Would you mind showing these young ladies how delightful a thing the mesmeric slumber is, my dear?"

"Oh, certainly, I will do it with pleasure," replied the obliging child; and she was accordingly seated in an arm chair, where, after performing the same pantomime as Tom had undergone, Mr. ——n pointed silently towards the girl, who was sleeping most calmly. She then began to sing, in a clear and heavenly voice,

"Oh Jim along, Jim along Josey!"

"Where are you?" asked Mr. ——n.

"In marble halls," replied the girl.

"What are they like?"

"Oh, beautiful, beautiful!—like the House of Lords."

"I do not like this conversation," said Mrs. Delectable, in a whisper, to the mesmeriser; "it is wrong, very wrong."

"Don't you?" said Mr. ——n, and strange to say the girl changed her tone.

"Where are you now?" said Mr. ——n.

"In gypsy tents," said the sleeper.

"What are they like?"

"Like the House of Commons."

"Oh, for shame!" cried all the parlour-boarders together, "Oh, for shame!"

"I think that vision is over now," said Mr. ——n, and Mrs. Delectable said "that it was quite time it should."

"Whom do you love?" asked Mr. ——n.

"Prince A——," said the girl.

"Oh, you do not soar half high enough," said the mesmeriser, laughing. "Does he love you?"

"I think he does," replied the sleeper.

"What! Prince A—— love that girl?" exclaimed the parlour-boarders.

"I think he does," persisted the sleeper.

"What makes you think so?" asked the mesmeriser.

"Because—because—" said the girl, "when his Royal Highness went to Scotland, he was shooting a hare, and he said very sweetly, 'Get out of the way, there's a good girl!'"

"I don't think Prince A—— would like all this," said Mrs. Delectable. "Indeed, I am not sure if the Queen will not transport us for high treason."

"She can't, Madam," said Mr. ——n, with

a bland smile, "she can't, because people in mesmeric slumbers are not amenable to '*common law.*'"

"You cannot imagine" continued Mr. ——n, "how many wonderful operations have been performed since this heavenly state of forgetfulness has been invented. I do not think it advisable to take a leg or an arm off that young lady, but I will pinch her a little."

"Oh, pray don't," cried the parlour-boarders.

"It won't hurt her," said Mr. ——n. Upon which he pinched her cheek.

"Do you feel that?" cried Mr. ——n.

The girl began to sing.

"I told you she would like it," said Mr. ——n, giving her another pinch, and another, and another.

"I can't stand *that*," cried the sleeper,

starting up, "it is more than I can bear for a guinea!"

"How strange!" said Mr. ——n, "that when mesmerised persons awake they say such ridiculous things!"

"Very strange!" repeated Mrs. Delectable.

"Very!" cried all the parlour-boarders.

"Very!" said the teachers.

"Very!" repeated the girls; and so we all agreed that the opportune arrival of a girl (who had never received a guinea for pretending to sleep), had given us an insight into the fashionable belief of the day.

I have crossed every inch of my paper, therefore I cannot begin any other subject, but sign myself

Very affectionately yours,

MARIA MONTAGU.

Letter XV.

Berkeley Square.

My dear Maria,

Your description of mesmerism, which of course is true and correct, amused me exceedingly. I have no doubt the poor girl endeavoured to win her guinea. What a pity Mr. ——n pinched her too hard! Our house has lately been the scene of a tragedy, I was going to say; but it may perhaps be called a farce. The fact is, our butler and footman have been playing "high life below stairs."

The butler wishing to be very polite to James, asked him to drink tea with him in his pantry; forgetting at the time that the plated tea-pot had been sent to be repaired: the consequence was, that a black one was substituted instead. This wounded James's dignity; and the maids were terribly afraid that a duel

would follow, or, at least a challenge for one. The housemaid, being a very hysterical person, only cried; but the lady's maid, being partial to James, took the precaution of hiding the knives and the toasting-fork, indeed everything pointed and bordering on steel. She then called Papa, who was compelled to give both delinquents warning, for, he said, James had been a drummer when he was young, and although he had left the service because there was no brevet promotion at the time, and he saw no chance of being made colonel of the regiment; still, having, as it were, a touch of military fire in him, Papa justly observed that he would explode some day, as he was sure his dignity had been much wounded by the obnoxious black tea-pot. Accordingly both butler and footman left, and I believe the latter is now in Ireland. He has written

several letters in the "Times," saying that he shall be happy to fight any one who says he is wrong; but, fortunately, he satisfies himself with silence, as no one says he is right.

London is still very dull, and fashions make vain attempts at aping everything antique. A strange covering for the head, called a gipsy bonnet, twinkled like a star for a few weeks, and was chased away by comets of more approved excellence. The fact is, several methodist preachers wrote pamphlets on the subject, saying that as gipsies were a notorious and dishonest race of beings, it was no use trying to be like them. I am now passing my time in reading three sets of novels in a day, and I afterwards write reviews upon them. I think I was a little too severe about "Agincourt," but I had no idea my opinion would be sent to the "Times." The fact is,

I had directed it in an absent fit of *ennui*, and the footman took it to the "Post." Mr. James made a very spirited defence, but the subject was hardly worth it, for parliament is determined to put down *A—gin—court:* as Father Mathew justly observes, as long as those edifices are erected, the working classes will drink liquor. It also appears that Mr. James does *not* write by steam, as it is reported, for I believe he has a glass tube, through which he blows his books. I almost think the plan will not answer, as blown glass is pretty without, but hollow within. Mamma has set aside her embroidery, and is very busy looking for a new footman and butler. Those gentry generally make early calls; she has been to twenty *modistes* to procure caps to make her look as dignified in the morning as when she sits in her opera box. This makes

these levées very expensive indeed. You cannot imagine how difficult it is to get a footman just now, for those who want places have been so long feeding on the empty season, that it is useless to think of fattening them before next drawing-room, and lean footmen look as if their masters were going down in the world, which accounts for noblemen having such fat servants. I can tell an old aristocratic footman in a moment; I am not to be imposed upon by a peerage a year old.

The fog is so thick to-day that I am quite opaque, so I really must conclude, and remain, though fog-stricken,

Your sincere friend,

ELIZA DASHWOOD.

Letter XVI.

Myrtle Cottage.

My dear Eliza,

If your servants have been playing "High life below stairs," I can assure you we have been acting "Fiction driven out by truth;" and so you will say when you hear my tale. Mrs. Delectable having banished poetry from her establishment, chose to make a little exception one evening, as she said acting Shakspeare would not harm us, and she ended by declaring we might act "Romeo and Juliet." Accordingly we clubbed together, and after making up a very respectable little fund, a carpenter was sent for, and altogether our little theatre presented a beautiful aspect; the actors and actresses generously refused to be paid for their services, and voted that the surplus from the funds should be given to buy

a splendid curtain, which would serve after the acting was over to decorate the best parlour windows. This so pleased Mrs. Delectable that she promised to give a *petit souper* in the green room, to the actors and actresses, who might each invite a friend. Two or three gentlemen were refused admittance because they wore moustaches, but long-faced married gentlemen were ushered in to the stirring scene.

Miss Falkland being the prettiest girl in the school, was unanimously chosen as Juliet; but, unfortunately, the young lady refused to rehearse, for she said that her prompter was to be secured in a closet behind the scenes, and if she were as deaf as a beetle, she protested she could not help hearing. Now it so happened, that Miss Falkland had told a fib when she was a very little girl, and her papa had whipped her

until—as the cooks call it when they make syllabub—she felt "all a heap of nothing." This had made such an impression upon our Juliet, that she determined never to tell a fib—no, never—never.

Well, the play began amidst a torrent of applause, and at length Romeo (Miss Stacey *en pantalons*) gained showers of bouquets. Then Miss Falkland asked, in the most touching accents imaginable—accents which sent twenty pocket-handkerchiefs up to forty eyes—

"Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?"

Romeo would have answered, but just then poor Miss Falkland was seized with a panic recollection of being "whipped to nothing for telling a fib," and she suddenly exclaimed—

"Indeed, indeed! you know you are not Romeo. You know you are Adelaide Stacey. You know it—pray do not tell a fib!"

The spectators roared with laughter; the curtain fell; and so did the girls, for they fell upon Miss Falkland, and very nearly tore her to pieces.

A vain attempt was made to restore order, and Miss Stacey advanced to apologize to the audience, who, feeling tired and hungry, though they did not hiss, were so dreadfully dull as to prefer seeing the Catchucha, the Valse à deux temps, the Mazurka, and the Polka danced, instead of hearing Shakspeare. Thus "Fiction was driven out by truth," and the Polka drove us to supper: it was held in the green-room, that is, the music apartment; and a green set of creatures we were, for all our theatrical manœuvre had ended in giving Mrs. Delectable a sky-blue curtain, which she ordered the servants to fold up and cover. As to the supper, Mrs. Delectable follows Abernethy's rules, and he does not think

supper necessary for young ladies, consequently we were asked to partake of the luxuries around in a negative inquiry—"You wont take any tart, Miss Browning? No, I daresay not. You would rather not have any figs, Clara? Oh, they *are* heavy at night. You are quite right."

"No wine, Miss Montagu?—quite right, love. Bilious remember."

Securing two or three cakes, as dry as if some ante-diluvian confectioner had made them, the *petit souper* ended, one old gentleman declaring "he wondered we could waltz so lightly after such boa-constrictor mouthfuls."

We never retired to our pillows with such unpleasant reflections. I think Mrs. Delectable would have sympathized with us, only her curtain had been so saved, by not being drawn up and down, that she ended by kissing

Miss Falkland on both cheeks, and saying her papa should hear of that beautiful trait in her character. About twelve o'clock at night we heard most dismal sounds, and found that Miss Falkland's prompter had been left in the large cloak-closet, as the door had been suddenly closed in the confusion attending Miss Stacey's failure. Poor little creature! the noise of the dance and the music had prevented her being heard, until in the midnight hour, when all was still, and we had been too much excited to miss her. Then a doleful voice was heard to exclaim — "Romeo, dear Miss Stacey, Juliet, dear Miss Falkland, do open the closet, I *did* try to read as well as I could. Romeo—Juliet—it is so dark." At last the prompter was rescued, her teeth chattering with fright, looking altogether as ashy-white as if, like Juliet, she had taken a peep at mother earth.

I really hope you sympathize with us. Pray

do not review our acting. For pity's sake take compassion on the companions of

Your sincere friend,

MARIA MONTAGU.

LETTER XVII.

MY DEAR ELIZA,

If nearly choking with laughter be sympathy; if running from friend to friend, with your letter in my hand be pathetic; if fancying amidst peals of mirth that I see "Fiction driven away by truth," oh, surely then, you have come to the right channel for sympathy —the very essence of it. But if you expect an amusing letter from me, I am afraid I shall disappoint you, though perhaps a little moralizing would suit your discomfited nerves. The fact is, I am working for a fancy fair. I

am surrounded by silks and pieces of velvet two inches large, and am trying to make a pin-cushion, representing a most unfortunate star; then I am to work in the middle, in golden letters, "Welcome little stranger," as ladies say when they hail the birth of their thirteenth child. I have promised to hold a stall, under the chaperonage of Lady Propriety and Miss Manners; and the two together will keep me in order. I am afraid I affronted a young friend of mine, for she sent me a pair of garters to sell, and of course I could not accept them, as I am told gentlemen frequently attend those sales, and it is no use saying *" Honi soit qui mal y pense"* now-a-days, for government is too wise to bestow an order upon a subject for so hackneyed a phrase. Another lady sent me a pair of braces, as *if* I could sell them. Suppose a gentleman wanted to try if they were long enough, what *should*

I do? My stall, therefore, will be composed of the most innocent articles imaginable. The fair is to be held at Greenwich, and it is to be hoped the military from Woolwich will not attend, for although I could remain with a free heart until I "come out," if I gaze only on peaceful citizens, I am quite sure I cannot withstand the attractions of an officer. I am told one look is enough to shoot any maiden's heart. It takes half a glance from a colonel, one from a major, two from a captain, three from a lieutenant, and even a cadet can sometimes achieve a conquest, if he be a tall boy for his age, and knows how to look very sentimental.

Having nothing better to do, Papa went to the cattle-show, and a large sheep rubbing against his coat, he was so pleased with the animal that he paid an enormous price in order to secure a leg for his table. Strange to

say, an ox performed nearly the same feat to Prince Albert. How beautifully they have been trained. As Papa managed to find a *passe temps* at this dull time of the year, I made him discover some amusement for me, and accordingly he took me to hear a dreadful discordancy of sounds, meant to exemplify the system of "Singing for the Million." Never did I hear such shrieks. I fancy the name is derived from the sanguine master thinking he will make "a million" by such a process of deafening people.

I have just received a letter of invitation from Uncle Alfred, who is going back to his estate near Devonshire. As London continues as empty as an author's head, at the end of a novel of four hundred pages each volume, I cannot do better than take a peep at the ex-bachelor's sorrows. He wrote Mamma a tolerably cheerful letter, considering he is

only yet a novice in all the misery which he has entailed upon himself. He says that he has discovered wonderful traits in the female character since his wedding-day, and records one remarkable fact:—

"When I looked at the curled head of Cherry, in Dickens's Pecksniff," says Uncle, "I thought the tiers of curls much exaggerated; but my wife retires to roost every night with twenty-four papers on each side, although she only sports three curls in the day-time, composed of seventeen hairs in each. Tell me," says Uncle in conclusion, "is not this a shocking waste of paper? as I cannot allow my wife to squander my property."

I know very well Aunt wears false hair; so she must have a wig made for the night, to pretend she curls her hair. What a spirit for inventing some women have, which accounts

for so many patent traps they set to catch unsuspecting bachelors.

I really must finish my pincushion, and this must be my only excuse for a shorter note than usual.

Believe me,

Most truly yours,

ELIZA MONTAGU.

LETTER XVIII.

Myrtle Cottage.

MY DEAR ELIZA,

A short time ago I had feigned illness to complain of, but now I really have been, and am still, in real pain. Throw a cup of warm liquid over yourself, my dear, and tell me if it be painful. That method of judging of another's woes would be like, in Queen Mary's

time, when Bonner proved the burning experiment on his own arm.

Maintenant à mon récit. I was going to say *revenons à nos moutons,* but there was no mutton in the case; it was all human flesh I can assure you. The fact is, that the *petit souper de theâtre* served not to satisfy us, but to remind us that there were such articles as sweet and agreeable eatables. We all determined to have a feast such as Alexander might envy. Amongst other dainties, warm chocolate was to be the finest production—of the table, you think; but bed is the word, for it was *en négligé, en papillotes, enfin;* like fashionable London ladies, *au lit,* it was that we were to have our feast.

As soon as the teachers, parlour-boarders, and Mrs. Delectable were safe in the dining-room, eating their supper, the servant (who had been bribed with six or seven cap-ribbons) entered our dormitories, and presented us each

with a reeking cup of hot chocolate. Unfortunately, Mrs. Delectable had left her spectacles up stairs, and wishing to seek them, some amiable sympathy of human nature gave her a strong inclination to see how her sweet pupils looked stretched in the arms of Morpheus. I cannot help thinking she might have been contented with gazing upon us in the day time; but Mrs. Delectable had read "The Sleeping Beauty," and seen it acted too; consequently, she wished to satisfy herself that closed eyes were as beautiful as poets pretend they are.

Hearing that well-known Delectable step, we wished her safe eating her supper; though one young lady wished she were with a friend whose name I dare not mention.

"Are you asleep?" cried our worthy instructress. "Are you warm? Are you comfortable?"

When lo! as she approached my bed, I

spontaneously placed the warm chocolate under the sheets—Oh, unfortunate moment!—when the scalding mixture fell upon my thinly-clad form; my screams could have been heard above Lablache's notes, and my treble ones of exclamation were as piercing as Persiani's. They thrilled through Mrs. Delectable's sensitive nerves; and striking the other six young ladies with a sudden panic, they, too, upset their *petit souper*, but, very luckily, they burned the sheets instead of their bodies.

For two hours I was covered with oatmeal poultices, and Mrs. Delectable talked of the sad consequences of greediness all the while.

"Suppose," said she, "you were to die in consequence of being burnt, greediness would have carried you to the grave."

I could not help smiling in the midst of my pain, as I reflected that my epitaph would have

been rather original if I had died. Only fancy:

> " Here lies Maria Montagu
> Who daily still more greedy grew:
> She died concealing, when too late,
> A cup of scalding chocolate."

I can assure you, I was like a skeleton a week ago. Poor aunty cried bitterly, as she exclaimed, " Body-snatchers would let the dead rest, if they could practise on live people; and I declare, Maria, I can count all your bones."

Mrs. Delectable agreed I *was* rather thin; but she added that nothing save low diet could restore me to health.

Accordingly, I was still regaled with water gruel for two days; and it is very strange that my mind became inspired with an ardent wish of patronizing the fine arts. I bought twenty pictures at a penny a piece, from a little

girl who had stripped her mamma's pocket-books, half a century old, and taking some of the delicious gruel intended for my dainty meal, I pasted an album full of those beautiful designs; some of them are old fashions of dresses, &c., but I understand that, the older pictures are, the more valuable they are considered; and I mean to present my collection to the members of the French *académie.*

I have no doubt you will greatly enjoy the fancy fair, but pray beware of the *moustachioed* gentlemen. Mrs. Delectable was obliged to change our pew once, because a colonel, on half-pay, looked at us. Indeed, I think he smiled, but it might have been a fanciful imagination of the brain; for I do not think he would have been so wicked, for he must have known how pained we were to lose our pew, which was nearest the stove; whilst, since then, we are in a dark corner in the gallery,

just as if we were in those cloisters Mr. Ainsworth has had lithographed in his works.

I am sure you will agree that I may be allowed to eat like a lord mayor, when I am once more surrounded by some of Aunty's fare.

I enclose you a little needle-book for your stall. Hoping you will like it,

I remain,

Your affectionate

MARIA MONTAGU.

LETTER XIX.

Devonshire.

MY DEAR MARIA,

It would be very wrong of me to talk about myself, before I express my fervent hope that your frame is again in better condition than that of a houseless dog, who has wandered

away from the bone of contention he used to pick. Why did you not creep into the larder, like Napoleon's soldiers in their horses' carcasses on the plains in Russia; but I suppose you thought greediness was heinous enough, without adding theft to your list of sins. As school girls are a little given to exaggeration, I cannot help hoping you have overrated your sufferings, and will give you a little account of myself.

The fancy fair was held in a large hall, and very well attended, as the ladies in the neighbourhood of Greenwich, namely, Charlton, Blackheath, &c., are very charitable and good.

Several ladies asked me for tracts. I could have made a fortune for the funds of the society if I had been provided with those interesting documents. I believe that servants in the country light the fires with them. Lady Propriety and Miss Manners endeavoured

to keep me in order; they reminded me that I was to remember I was not *out* yet, and therefore ought not to be conspicuous. I was quite aware I was not *out*, but *in*, quite *in* for a day of sport. I never returned the gentlemen their change; but, of course, with the ladies it was different. I gave them silver and half-pence, taking care to wrap them in a pamphlet lauding the fancy fair; and not forgetting to curtsey with due reverence.

It was rather provoking, but I really had not half the things which were required; for country ladies are more prudent than London ones, and they *fancy fair* play to perfection; thinking exchange is no robbery, they give their money to the poor, and expect to buy in return something serviceable to themselves.

"Hast thou any sand dials, correct, and moveable on little wheels, friend?" asked a rather pleasant-looking quaker lady.

"No friend," I answered; "but I have an egg-boiler, with a place underneath for spirits to move the water into warmth."

My cousin John had sent me this *cadeau*, and the quaker lady purchased it, moving away and speaking in a spirit of great content.

Lady Propriety prevented my laughing, and after nearly choking with suppressed mirth, my risible powers were again excited.

"Have you von leetel ting for put near lady's nose?" asked a Frenchman with a fat, sallow face.

. . . . .

"What do you mean?" I asked. "Perhaps you want a scent-cushion," and I handed him one.

"No, no. Not noting like this," cried the new-comer, throwing down the blue silk cushion. "I want a ting for burn a lady's nose."

"I have no crackers," I replied, remember-

ing we used to burn each other with squibs on the fifth of November.

"It romantic essence I want," persisted the Frenchman. "Romantic vinegar."

"*Aromatic vinegar*," I exclaimed, bursting into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. I happened to have this little *piquante* thing to burn a lady's nose, and thus made out my bill:

	£	s.	d.
Aromatic vinegar	0	2	6
Wool	0	6	0
Bottle	0	12	0
Interpreting bad English . .	0	10	0
Loss of time consequent . .	0	5	0
Paper to wrap the bottle in . .	0	2	0
	£1	17	6

"There, sir," I cried, giving Frenchy his bill with great grace and gravity. The gallant

gentleman placed two pounds on the stall, and did not wait for the change. Am not I a good shopwoman?

You will perceive that I am now in Devonshire, but as I only arrived here last night, you can well imagine I have not much information to give you. Uncle Alfred and my new Aunt, are still in that turtle-dove existence which new married people follow up for a short time after their marriage; that is to say, Uncle kisses Aunt two or three times in an hour. No, now do not laugh, he does *not* actually kiss her, but he kisses the tips of his fingers like babies do when their nurses tell them to cry out "Tata," and blowing the kiss towards Aunt, like little boys when their nurses say, "Blow a kiss to that lady," he says, "Shut the door, there's a good old girl." "Bring me my slippers, there's a duck!" Once I heard Aunt mutter to herself, "Can't he ring the bell?" but she

seems a pattern of submission, and does not work, read, or employ herself in any manner whatever, in order, I suppose, that she may be enabled to rise as soon as her services are required.

Uncle's house is situated in a sequestered spot, where, like Mrs. Delectable's Myrtle Castle, the air is wafted pure and sweet from the country around. Aunt is as smart as many colours can make her, and Uncle still sports *the* gold-buttoned coat. Poor fellow! it reminds him that it is the badge of his slavery; but at present he feels like the slaves after the Apprenticeship Bill was passed, he knows he is in a state of *probation*, as Aunt leads him yet with a silken curb. When the iron chains are to come he knows not, but he feels they *will*; how soon will depend, perhaps, on his behaviour. You will say this comparison is a bad one, because the slaves

looked forward to pleasure, not pain; but I maintain I am *right*, for I once heard a married gentleman protest, "He liked his wife better when he found she had a little of the virago in her nature, for what *was* the use of being married, and having the dreadful expense of a wife, if she let him run into all sorts of wrong ways, and allowed him to walk in the crooked path of sin?" So, dear Maria, do not foster too many mild qualities, for I am assured they will be driven away, like snow before the wind, as soon as you enter the stirring field of a matrimonial existence. How beautifully meek Mrs. Delectable's twelve parlour-boarders are! What a contrast to married people! How contentedly they sip tea made of sloe leaves, instead of champagne! How they retire at nine o'clock, instead of one in the morning! How they read missionaries' journals, instead of silly novels! How they are clad in vestal white,

instead of gaudy satins! How they call themselves thirty when they are thirty-five, instead of deducting ten years from their existence! How they give farthings to all the little street sweeps (for which reason Government has issued half-farthings to enable them to extend their charitable donations)! Oh, those twelve parlour-boarders are a sweet sample of the excellence of a single existence; and I cannot help thinking my new aunt would have been so happy had she been at Myrtle Cottage, and joined the community.

As the post is going away, I am forced to conclude. I will give you a description of the little village, &c., in my next. Until then,

Believe me, as ever,

Your sincere friend,

ELIZA DASHWOOD.

Letter XX.

Myrtle Cottage.

My dear Eliza,

Mrs. Delectable desires me to say, with her kind love, that I should have had the pleasure of writing to you ere now, but in consequence of the very worst of behaviour I have been justly prevented from addressing you. Oh, how sorry I am to have given Mrs. Delectable so much trouble! How kindly she ministered to my wants; tasting each cup of gruel, and sometimes my medicines, although she cordially dislikes both. The sin of greediness caused me to be dreadfully scalded, but I did not suffer half so much pain as I deserved; and not half so much as I should, had not Mrs. Delectable wisely kept me on low diet, in order

that my mind should be free, and able, in consequence, to reflect upon the heinousness of sin: doubly augmented in my case, for I slyly ate some chocolate and upset it on myself the very evening after Mrs. Delectable had given us a *petit souper*. I have spent most sleepless nights. At first I was silly enough to think hunger kept me awake, but I remember reading that hungry people feel very sleepy; and I justly remembered that it was the remorse I felt for my sad conduct which deprived me of my rest.

Aunty is much shocked at my conduct, and I am going to her to-morrow, in order that she may read me several extracts on the subject of greediness, and enable me to write a proper apology to Mrs. Delectable; who is very much vexed that I should have preferred chocolate to the wholesome milk and water which she thinks fit to give us.

I cannot write cheerfully, and therefore I shall conclude. Tears of repentance having blotted my paper, I must apologize for my scrawl. And

Believe me,

Your afflicted friend,

MARIA MONTAGU.

LETTER XXI.

Myrtle Cottage.

MY DEAR MISS DASHWOOD,

I cannot help adding a little postcript to Maria's letter, just to tell you I am not so angry with her as you might suppose from her statement. I always remember that I was young once myself, but I am nevertheless compelled to recollect that it is not fit for my pupils to know this. It is better they

should imagine I was born wise and sage, like Minerva, armed with wisdom from my birth.

I was very thankful to perceive by Eliza's note (which, poor dear, she wrote under the impression I should not see it) that she really repented of her sin. Lady Markham has invited her to Claremont Terrace, in order, I believe, to make her fully ashamed of her folly, and I need not request you to address her there, and to make her aware of your astonishment.

I am,

Dear Miss Dashwood,

Your sincere friend,

CLARISSA ANGELINA DELECTABLE.

Letter XXII.

Claremont Terrace.

Dear Eliza,

You need not give yourself the trouble of writing me a "moral for the benefit of Aunty," as she has told me all her say, which was, "Eat as much as you can, dear Maria, and pray recruit yourself, and I shall give orders for you to have a cup of chocolate for breakfast every morning." It was very wise of Mrs. Delectable to let me go to Claremont Terrace, as I should have starved the garrison had my appetite been allowed to return at Myrtle Cottage.

The school is very full now. I was going to say you could not put a pin's head between us, but I mean, unless we slept three in one bed, there is no more room for an addition to our

party. The last comers were four sisters. They are orphans; and their grandmother promised never to leave them, consequently she came to school also; thus making up a baker's dozen of parlour-boarders. These young ladies have very little peace, as, after their allotted studies are over, their grandmamma teaches them knitting; and whenever we pass her door we hear her inventing new patterns, exclaiming aloud, "Take two stitches; pass over two; slip one; take up the rest," and so on.

The fourth Miss Clarence spoils the party, or else we should have called them the degrees of comparison; as it is, we manage it by a patent way. Their sizes are perfectly graduated to their ages; tall, taller, tallest, and *still tallerer* is the fourth. Then they are very good; so we say, good, better, best, and *betterest* is the fourth. They all wear plaits like pig's-tails, except the youngest; so we call

the eldest a pig with a long tail, the second has a short tail, the third a shorter still, and the youngest no tail at all. Their grandmother makes cherry-coloured satin bows to place at the end of those charming plaits; and on great occasions she makes sky-blue ones.

The parlour-boarders are delighted that a piece of anatomy so much older than themselves should have come amongst them; and her services are often required to make little cherry-coloured bows, in order that the said parlour-boarders should decorate their white muslin dresses with them in the spring.

There has been an elopement in the town. Mr. Forrester went to see the skating, with his daughter, when suddenly her lover asked her to waltz with him on the ice. Mr. Forrester had not time to answer, before the charming pair were gliding on the water; and thus they glided till they jumped into a carriage drawn

by four swift horses, and thus they rode till they found their way to Gretna Green. Mr. Forrester is so very sorry he did not learn skating when he was a boy, or he would have followed down the stream; as it is, he has sent his six sons to a boarding-school, where they are to learn to skate three hours a day; and, in summer, they are to practise on a waxed board.

They say, the "course of true love never runs smooth," but a friend of Aunt's, who saw Miss Forrester and her lover run, declares they went smoothly enough, and cut figures on the ice, representing the triumph of Cupid over the gorgons who guard young ladies.

This adventure on the ice has *frozen* fathers into a *hard* determination not to allow their daughters to look at skating; and nothing will *melt* them, not even a heavy *thaw* of tears. I should not wonder if my papa took fright,

and ordered me home; in which case I shall ask for a pension for life, as, I believe, all celebrated persons do, if recalled home before their time.

Expecting to hear more about your sweet aunt, with kind remembrance to my old friend, your uncle,

Believe me,

Truly yours,

MARIA MONTAGU.

LETTER XXIII.

Devonshire.

MY DEAR MARIA.

According to my promise, I am now going to give you a full and accurate description of the vicinity in which Uncle's house is situated.

First, the ladies in the neighbourhood are

very evangelical, their dress very puritanical, and their manners very antediluvian. Their little village is so purely good that they christened it, with one accord, the "hamlet of peace." The shopkeepers are very demure, and the bakers wrap up their muffins and crumpets in tracts. I do not think Aunt will ever be admitted into one of the peaceful côteries, called, by a strange mistake, evening parties. One old lady, in a brown gown, a black shawl, and a coarse straw bonnet with plaid ribbon on it, paid us a visit, with the intention of asking Aunt to give a donation for the missionary box. Aunt, mistaking her purpose, fancied it was a bridal visit, and began to talk of her intention of giving a Polka dance. The old lady lifted up her eyes, and declared that the Polka must have been an inventive dance concocted by the imp of darkness. Upon which

Aunt said, "that very sweet music had been set to it, and that music was reckoned very celestial."

"Now," said her opponent, "I know Mr. Jullien *has* written Polkas; but although I never saw that gentleman in my life, I would not bet—(oh, no, because betting is gambling;) but I feel certain Jullien *must* be very dark."

My aunt could not say that gentleman was very fair; she therefore changed the subject, talked of singing, declared, "We may be happy yet," was a very pretty song.

"I should like to see it," said the visitor: "I like the sound of the words; a sort of hymn, I suppose."

My aunt replied "she was afraid it was a love song." Upon which the visitor said, "Oh, dear me, what a strange taste!" She then talked once more of the missionary box. Aunt contributed a shilling, and I promised to

save all my half-farthings for the funds; thus my Aunt and her visitor parted, both feeling assured that "they walked in quite different paths."

Aunt's conversation is very monotonous; consequently Uncle has taken refuge in a game of—draughts, do you think? No, nothing so simple. Chess? No, nothing so aristocratic. Cards? Yes, but not vingt-et-un or whist; actually they play at cribbage. There they sit, close to the fire, "snug and cozy," as the patent nightcap is advertised. Yes, there they sit, with a board between them, continually repeating, "Fifteen two, fifteen four, go it, fifteen three, game." Aunt's three curls, composed each of fifteen hairs, are now surmounted by a demi-bonnet, composed of a mixture of tulle, pink roses, and geranium leaves; altogether she is charmingly fashionable. One Sunday she went to church with a bird of

paradise in her bonnet; every eye was turned towards the high soaring bonnet; the charity girls giggled, and the charity boys murmured "Well, if that lady 'arnt got a *hanimal* in her bonnet, my name 'arnt Jemmy Doronderry."

"Hush!" cried the schoolmaster; but it would not do; the hymns were sung out of tune, and the clerk forgot to say "amen;" his eyes being rivetted to Aunt's bonnet, as if, with a feline appetite, he were ready to pounce upon the bird. If the out-of-doors apparel of my aunt be smart, much praise is due to her inventive genius in-doors. One evening, I had the delightful pleasure of seeing her ensconce forty-eight *papillotes*, attached to a silk caul, into a most bewitching composition of embroidery and net, ornamented with pink bows, which rose up like Mount Etna. Justly imagining I was admiring the elegant production, Aunt proceeded to tell me that her

night-caps were dreadfully expensive, and young ladies ought never to think of anything save drawn muslin and little bobbins. Perhaps she is right, for neither you nor I, my dear, would like to wear such colossal bows as those I fain would describe.

Your romantic description of the icicled elopement has considerably raised skating in my estimation; and if I do not marry, flirt, or engage myself this season, I will try and cut Cupid's figure on the Serpentine.

Such a cold idea has frozen my fingers, and here I must conclude, as usual, remaining,

Your affectionate friend,

ELIZA DASHWOOD.

Letter XXIV.

Myrtle Cottage.

My dear Eliza,

If my letters be very badly formed, if the long tails seem to be tumbling over the smaller ones, if my whole production be very faulty, accuse the excessive darkness into which a too fervent vision has thrown the Myrtle establishment.

You know our next neighbour, Sir Samuel Sprout, is a baronet, has three sons and a private tutor. Now, one of these aristocratic Sprouts fell in love with a young lady of the name of Brussel, an exquisite creature, who generally dresses in green, because it typifies hope. Miss Brussel took it in her head that she had lost her heart, for she was constantly suffering a pain in her left side; and she fur-

ther imagined that the said heart had flown toward one of the young Sprouts, as the second young gentleman of that name had been heard to say that Brussel and Sprout ought to be joined together. Several interesting notes were exchanged between them.

"*Di piacer mi balza il cor,*" sung Miss Brussel, as young Sprout sent her a note dexterously placed at the end of a fishing rod, and thrown, not in a stream, but into Miss Brussel's room, from window to window. "*Una voce poco fa,*" sung young Sprout, as he heard a delectable voice; but though the boast was well sung, the "*Una voce*" proved to be Mrs. Delectable's, who was in Miss Brussel's room at the auspicious moment, when, like in "Romeo and Juliet," a mother would have been *de trop,* much more a governess.

Instead of Myrtle Cottage looking "airy and light," it now looks very "white, though

sombre," for the windows are covered with a mixture of white paint, and bars are placed outside. You may, therefore, perceive Brussel had serious views of uniting herself to Sprout. We have calculated that it will take a year before we can rub off all the paint, and it impedes our view sadly. It was so beautiful to look upon the green before the house, and watch a school of boys playing leap-frog, superintended by a master, who chose to call this leaping over each other's backs, "learning to fence." I had, besides, made very interesting pictures of the head-usher, but now my portraits are at an end.

Mrs. Delectable has kept her room for two days. She protests she has a severe head-ache, but I believe it is a heart-ache, as it is touching to behold our dismal countenances.

You never told me how your mamma liked her new footman. You will be astonished to

hear that Mrs. Delectable has parted with her favourite Thomas. The only fault she found in him was, that he grew too tall! It is a dreadful thing when you are getting accustomed to the services of a tiger, and he wilfully persists in growing into a man! Mrs. Delectable went on adding button after button to Thomas's coat, until, at length, there was not space for a pin between. All in vain! The tiger *would* not look more juvenile! He *would* go on growing! and at length Mrs. Delectable was obliged to send him away.

We are very sorry. Thomas was a thorough-bred tiger. He knew when to spring, and where to find his prey. He knew where the letters were concealed, that he was to post *sans* permission. He knew the best shops for those forbidden items of gingerbread celebrity which school-mistresses forbid; and now we have to begin again our routine of tiger training.

The new tiger just reaches the top of Mrs. Delectable's second flounce; and he has received a solemn intimation that as soon as he reaches the third he must leave Myrtle Cottage. Did he *not* look at his new buttons! and did he *not* determine not to grow if he could possibly avoid it!

I have not much news to tell you. The spring is budding forth its green leaves, and Mrs. Delectable is very busy administering prunes and senna. Dickens talks of Mrs. Squeers giving the boys treacle and brimstone in Yorkshire, but I can assure that gentleman he has lost a great treat if he has never seen young ladies take prunes and senna. I had a dreadful idea yesterday morning; for I wished Mrs. Delectable, her senna, ay, her prunes, and even her silver spoon, further under *terra firma* than any sexton has ever dug.

You never had such a wish in the spring, of course not; but pray forgive

Your sincere friend,

MARIA MONTAGU.

LETTER XXV.

Berkeley Square.

MY DEAR MARIA,

I am sure you will forgive my long silence when I tell you I have been busily engaged in the last preparations for being presented. Oh, could Queen Victoria know what I have suffered! Could she know how Mamma has teazed me! how Papa has quizzed me! how my dancing-mistress has drilled me! how my maid has tortured me! how many sleepless nights I have passed! how I have sat and wondered whether I should ever have courage

to kiss her Majesty's hand! So nervous I felt, that I found myself kissing every thing I came near, in order to try my skill; and the last night but one before the important event, I arose up in my sleep and walked backwards. Walking backwards with graceful ease is more difficult than I ever imagined it could be. The last time I tried it I knocked down the two housemaids, and they fell over each other; declaring, "Well, I never! if this is presentation step, I wonder what the ladies do at court!"

All the servants in the house (except the cook, kitchen-maid, and the men servants) assisted at my toilet, and at length Lady Dashwood and her *honourable* daughter were ready to take their place in the gay throng of carriages. I was all in white, with nodding white plumes; but my heart beat so violently that I

thought it would fly to court long before I was there.

But all is now over. The Queen did not look as if she thought I was awkward; and Prince Albert did not, like Papa, seem to fancy I was a goose. And now, my dear, I am *out*.

Mamma has presented me with a beautiful little French poodle, "because," she says, "no lady can be seen without one." To tell the truth, I am rather afraid of dogs, and as I am assured I shall be obliged to kiss it, and to say, "Dear creature! sweet pet! loveable bijou! picture of creation! houri! darling!" &c., I am so sadly afraid the little waddling creature will take it in his head to return my affection; for, as it is a *fashionable* poodle, how is it possible that it should discern false from real attachment.

The very day I was presented, Mamma asked

Sir James Darrington to dine with us. He is to learn the seconds in my duetts, and have the free "*entrée de la maison.*" In short, my dear, I am led to believe a match between us is considered very eligible. We began operations accordingly. When he looked up, I looked down, and *vice versâ*. Then we turned from rosy red to ashy white, at least fifteen times in the evening; and my voice was so tremulous, that Papa declared "Modern composers spoiled all their music, by putting in so many shakes."

Lesson the first in love is over, and I reckon it will take six weeks to come to a *finale*; but as I hate long courtships, Mamma has promised to begin making my *trousseau* at once.

Before I left Devonshire I sent you a large basket of poultry, which I hope you have received; the fowls are particularly fine. Aunt, however, never eats them, for she had the

chicken pox a few months ago, and cannot help attributing it to having eaten something of a *fowl* nature; the consequence is she would rather wring their necks than eat a chicken.

Hoping you have no scruples of such a chicken-hearted nature,

Believe me,

Most truly yours,

ELIZA DASHWOOD.

LETTER XXVI.

Myrtle Cottage.

MY DEAR ELIZA,

I have received your parcel; I have seen your name in the paper amongst the list of drawing-room belles; I have heard Mrs. Delectable say several times, "The Honourable Miss Dashwood was presented: I trained her

well for the occasion!" I have heard all this, and now, I suppose, you are one of the happiest girls in the world.

You never described Sir James Darrington; but as you looked down so often, I conclude you are in the *dark* as regards the important items of complexion, and colour of his hair and eyes.

As I told you before, the spring is budding forth its leaves, and as soon as the donkeys on the common became aware of this, they very cleverly found their way to our door. This is an extraordinary instance of sagacity, and I will never believe a donkey is stupid. You are aware I am speaking of our annual expedition, when we all go to a farm to drink milk, and eat eggs and brown bread. Shades of Diogenes! look down upon us, as we partake of our frugal fare!

The four Miss Clarences were so kind as to turn up their tails for the day, and lent their dashing rosettes to the donkeys, whose ears were much elevated by their gay trimmings. As to the old farm woman, she was in a hail-storm of eggs—eggs—eggs—eggs; whichever way we trod, there were eggs; we gave the French teacher three, to allow us to eat six each; and as twenty-eight called for that number, the good woman went to the hen-coop and entreated the creatures to lay more eggs. The brown bread was excellent; that is to say, it nearly choked us, which, I believe, shows it was made of fine large husks.

I suppose the donkeys had eaten too much hay at the farm yard, for they were two hours, instead of one, returning home; and the French teacher had to scold the donkey boys

severely; for what do you think they insinuated? "That if ladies ate so much, they ought to ride ponies instead of donkeys."

If the shade of Diogenes did not look down upon us, the shade of evening did, and our donkeys were sent home with a severe reproof, to study astronomy on the common.

Talking of astronomy reminds me that we learn that divine study twice a week, under the English teacher's tuition. She teaches us by the Wilderspin system—relieving study by amusing anecdotes. She tells us there is a large bear in the sky, who triumphs sadly over a smaller one; and that a milkwoman mounted the sky, and upset her pails there, consequently there is a path called "The milky way." She also informed us, that a short time ago men were inventing wings, but the fate of the milkwoman reminded them that they would spill their gold for very little use.

The other night we were scared away by a ghost, but, *en toute* confidence, I think the ghost was Thomas ranging round his old haunts; forgetting he was no longer our tiger, he naturally came to see how the larder was. But I was always partial to Thomas, and allowed all my companions to stand with their teeth chattering with fright, wondering whether "Ursa major" had descended to our terrestrial globe.

I am very tired and sleepy, having nearly sprained my neck in looking at the stars; I must therefore conclude, remaining, as ever,

Your friend,

MARIA MONTAGU.

Letter XXVII.

Berkeley Square.

My dear Maria,

Shades of Diogenes wander round your donkeys, my old schoolfellow; but shades of Byron hover around me! Here I am, striving in vain to reply to a poetical rhapsody from Sir Francis Darrington. How I pity my *caro amante* if he went through the horrors of poet-ship I have! How I pity poet-laureates! For if their Sovereign be ever so *bad*, they are compelled to make "*good*" rhyme with "food." I want to tell Francis (it has come to my calling him, Francis, my dear) he is divine; but it would be too bold to say in the next line, "I wish you were mine," and I really do not know what else will rhyme so well: vine, pine, wine, dine, bine, fine—no, it will not do; but I will

see if I can find anything in Byron which will answer my purpose.

You reproach me for not having described my Francis, but I will give you now a full description of the charming creature. His hair is the colour of your Aunt Markham's chesnut mare; his eyes like the brown spots on your little Fido's back; his teeth as pearly as that set Mrs. Delectable declared were *too* white to look natural; his forehead as high as the monument (figuratively speaking, of course); his hands as white as Mont Blanc; his nose as straight as a new kitchen poker; his lips as red as the cherries I took at Myrtle Cottage; his figure like Belvidere's Apollo; his voice like the sweetest "Christmas chime." Never was such a splendid creature seen. All the girls who look at him, turn as yellow as a citron, now they hear he is *almost* engaged.

I was terribly angry with Papa the other

day, for I asked him to let me go with Francis in his cab, and he refused me. How very strange! if I am to be all my life with him, why cannot I do as I please? However, I will make up for all restraint when I am married. Won't I have my own way, that is all!

You can now verily believe, my dear, that I am perfectly fashionable; although I am always awake at eight o'clock, I would not for the world allow my maid to suppose I could rise till eleven. I lounge back in the carriage in Hyde Park, to show the world I was out at parties till daylight. Sometimes I hold a smelling bottle to my nose, and sometimes I kiss my French poodle. Both of these methods are highly approved of, and equally interesting. I know the names of all the actors and actresses, singers and players. I can walk through a quadrille as

if I were following a hearse. I can sleep at a concert, and faint at the Opera. I can cry without leaving any traces of weeping. I can laugh without distorting my face, and eat ices at Gunter's as fast as toffy at school. I can send twenty young men to rest, dreaming of me, and can sigh as if my heart were as flexible as patent elastic boots. But what can I not do? Much as I used to dislike champagne, I now abhor real pain as much; and I am as light as the most frothy nothing which sparkles at the top of that delusive beverage.

As Sir Francis has not yet proposed, I can only imagine it; and during the hours I am awake, that is between eight and eleven, I alter that innocent primitive game, A—apple pie, B—bit it; I begin at Q, and say, Q—query?—shall I marry? R—reasonably you must. N—nothing is certain. M—matrimony

is. I will give you the earliest intimation of a proposal; at present we progress slowly. Sir Francis has taken a fidgetty love of standing behind my chair, and counting the stitches in my embroidery frame. I keep a little note-book, meaning to remember all these items, and cure my husband as soon as he is mine; for I hate all this nonsense. He knows he has only to ask me, and I shall say yes.

Hoping he *will* have asked me ere I write again,

I remain,

Your affectionate,

ELIZA DASHWOOD.

Letter XXVIII.

Myrtle Cottage.

My dear Eliza,

Judging by your last letter, I should say that young ladies courting suffered terrible "*attaques de nerfs*," as I once heard Mamma's maid say, when Uncle Montagu had called her "a pretty girl." In plain English, my dear, you are a little coquettish, and I advise you to take care. If I were Sir Francis, between your laughing fits, crying fits, and fainting fits, I should be afraid of marrying so delicate a creature. Funerals, even the cheapest, are very expensive; and young men like Sir Francis do not like wearing crape.

Papa has written to Mrs. Delectable to inform her I am to return to Grosvenor Square next Midsummer, there to be "mas-

tered" with Italians, Germans, Spaniards, harpists, pianists, and every master imaginable; until, like yourself, I shall be considered perfect enough to "come out."

I have kept all your letters, my dear, and I am *au fait* at every thing, no fear. I shall be fashionable so spontaneously, that the world will style me innately genteel. Though much of my grace is hidden in a plain straw bonnet and a green stuff gipsy cloak, like the sulphur at the end of a lucifer match, it is all ready to submit to being lighted; and I shall now occupy my leisure hours in dressing dolls for fancy bazaars, in order to invent some very unique costume.

Mrs. Delectable is so sorry at the idea of parting with me; but I have promised to take one of her cards with me wherever I go, and I

fully intend sending every creature in her teens I meet with, to grow good and clever at Myrtle Cottage.

Aunt Markham has gone to Scotland. She had no particular complaint save curiosity, and has left her home in consequence of the Queen having visited Scotland. The fact is, she is writing a history of Queen Victoria, in order that hers may be the first in years to come; and she has determined to repair to every spot the Queen visited, in order to hear what her Majesty has said, and what she has not. A little boy of the name of Jones (brother, I believe to *the* famous Jones), has accompanied her, with the ostensible view of cutting her pencils and mending her pens; but the fact is, Aunt has an idea that Jones has an hereditary nimbleness, which will materially assist her in her literary disco-

veries. I must not forget to state that she has declared she will give two hundred half-farthings for the bowl in which the Queen drank milk in the old woman's cottage. Until this journey was talked of, I had no idea Aunt was an author; but I had always fancied she had a *notable* eye, a *biographic* memory, an *angular* figure, a *poetic* expression, and a march or walk of high intellect.

Poor Mrs. Delectable is very much shocked to think I have so long associated with an author; and she justly fears I shall be possessed of a very inventive genius, as writing is terribly catching. Mrs. Delectable says it runs through whole generations. She once knew a family who wrote, from the time they were born, treatises on "Nothing at all."

I do not feel at all bitten yet, but the

dog days have not yet arrived, *en attendant le temps littéraire.*

I remain,

Very truly yours,

MARIA MONTAGU.

LETTER XXIX.

Berkeley Square.

MY DEAR MARIA,

Pleased as I am to think you are going to leave school, still I pity you with all my heart. Oh, my dear! you leave a bear's den, to fall under the treacherous clasp of a serpent. You know not how wicked man's heart is. Would you believe it? Sir Francis Darrington protests he never dreamed of matrimony, but only of practising duetts; after writing poems to me which would have moved the hardest

heart, after looking at me till my eyes felt melting, after leaning behind my chair till I nervously spoiled my best work; it is all over, and Mamma must keep my *trousseau* for another occasion After all, it is no use fretting; it would spoil my complexion, and besides, Papa assures me that since Adam's fall, man has always been deceiving newly-introduced girls. So I must begin again practising duetts, looking up and down, &c.; and I will take especial pains not to kiss that hideous French poodle, for, *entre nous,* Sir Francis was very jealous. I am sure he was; for lately I remarked his complexion did *not* look as white as Mont Blanc: his eyes, too, were hardly as brown as Fido's back; and he certainly is not as tall as the monument. But lovers never can see aright, which makes courtship and fibbing one and the same thing.

I am so glad I copied the lines I wrote to Sir Francis from Byron, as, after all, he cannot now boast of having *my* poetry. It is wonderful I ever compared him to Belvidere's *chef d'œuvre*, as I now recollect he stoops dreadfully; and if any invidious young lady attempts to condole with me, all the unhappiness I shall wish her (and it will be enough), shall be that she may speedily become Lady Darrington. What an odious name! *Darington.* Yes, his *ton* was never very polite, always bold and foppish.

I am quite ashamed to think I ever spent an hour in his company. I am so glad to be released from the attentions of this odious man, that I am truly happy to finish talking of him. So no more on that subject from,

Your sincere friend,

ELIZA DASHWOOD.

Letter XXX.

Grosvenor Square.

My dear Eliza,

A month has passed since I received your last letter, and during the period which has elapsed you have no doubt contracted some more auspicious amour, whilst I have subdued the violent grief with which I was seized when I left the sweet shades of Myrtle Cottage.

It is time now for me to explain myself. I have only left school a month, but during my various holidays, my aunt, Lady Markham, was kind enough to introduce me to several very amiable creatures, ladies and—I am almost afraid to say—gentlemen too. Amongst others, Sir Francis Darrington was one; but as you seemed to think he was paying you great attentions, I thought it ad-

visable for you to learn, that when young baronets turn over music leaves, sing duetts, &c., it *may* sometimes be because their love is at school, and they *may* not always intend any thing at all serious.

Forgive me, my dear, as willingly as I forgive my truant knight, who now awaits my nineteenth birthday, when I am to become Lady Darrington. The harm you have wished me, believe me, is sweet bliss; therefore you have nothing to reproach yourself. If I ever become unhappy, you shall bear no blame. I hardly like to begin a longer correspondence until I hear from you, *en attendant la response.*

I remain,

Most truly yours,

MARIA MONTAGU.

Letter XXXI.

Berkeley Square.

You may well be ashamed to write a longer letter, you shameful, dreadful, wicked, deceitful, treacherous girl. Have I ever called you my *friend?* You are a serpent in female clothing. You deserve all sorts of misfortune.

I hope you will have ten, or twelve, or fourteen children, and all may have red hair, as I know you pride yourself on your raven tresses. I hope all your chimneys may smoke, and your dear, sweet Sir Francis may scold you well for it.

Farewell! If we meet in London, remember we do not know each other. Never have, I almost begin to *think,* but I *know* we never shall again.

Your conscience, I am sure, must upbraid you; so no more from

Your justly indignant,

ELIZA DASHWOOD.

P.S.—I send you back the pen-wiper you worked me at school.

THE END.

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